

May 26, 2004 --- CONSUMER ALERT

Montana Consumer Protection Office warns seniors: beware of fake Medicare prescription discount card scams

Helena, MT.— Governor Judy Martz warns Montana seniors to be on guard for mailings or phone calls from companies trying to sell bogus Medicare prescription cards. The new Medicare prescription discount cards do not go on sale until May 3, but already seniors are receiving letters and calls from companies possibly trying to cash in on the new program.

“Seniors should be extremely cautious about where they get their information on the Medicare prescription cards. Companies appear to be trying to cash in on what should be a help to our seniors,” Martz says.

Several Montanans have called the Montana Office of Consumer Protection about letters they received from a company that offers information about the new Medicare programs or ads they have seen on TV. The letter says in fine print it is not affiliated with Medicare. Seniors in other states have reported receiving similar letters and some have received calls from telemarketers. The telemarketers are asking seniors for their credit card numbers and bank account information, which is a sure sign of a scam.

Medicare has approved a limited number of companies that can sell the prescription drug cards. These companies will include a seal which states “Medicare approved” on their materials. Consumers can check the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov to see which companies are approved or call Medicare toll-free at (800) 633-4227.

The Medicare prescription discount card will cost \$30 or less for low income seniors. The card will save seniors between 10 and 25 percent on prescription drugs beginning June 1. More benefits are available for lower income seniors.